PROCEEDINGS OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN SOCIETY

A VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN

BY

Dr. WALTER SAISE, M.Inst.C.E.,

BARRISTER-AT-LAW

Read April 12, 1911

LONDON
CENTRAL ASIAN SOCIETY, 22, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1911

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The Chairman (Lord Ronaldshay, M.P.) said : My first duty is that of saying how deeply we, as a Society, feel the loss we have sustained in the death this week of Sir Alfred Lyall, who was, as you all know, a man of vast experience in Eastern matters. He was a man who had served nobly and well his country in that great dependency of India. But he was not merely a distinguished member of the Indian Civil Service ; he was known to a wider public than the public to which all Indian Civil Servants are known, for he was, in addition to his other accomplishments, a distinguished man of letters. I feel it would be impossible in addressing you at the first meeting of our Society after his lamented death to refrain from saying these few words of deep regret on behalf of the Society.

The paper we are to have this afternoon should be one of extraordinary interest. Dr. Saise was fortunate enough not long ago in India to receive an invitation from the Amir of Afghanistan to visit that country. The information we are to receive will therefore be at first-hand. There are not many of our fellow-countrymen who can give us such information, for travellers are sedulously kept outside the borders of the country. It is of all the greater interest, therefore, to hear Dr. Saise's impressions of the country made upon him so recently as the end of 1909, and with the pictures he has brought with him he will no doubt be able to give us a valuable account of the state of the country.

I accepted the kind invitation to address you to-day with great diffidence, and with some fear that my experiences in Afghanistan may not be of much interest to you. In my audience there may be several who have a greater and more intimate knowledge of that country and the people.

To me the visit was most interesting. It was my first acquaintance with a country ruled by an absolute monarch ; I had never before been protected by an armed guard on a journey. My journey, from the time I left Peshawur until my return to that place, lasted just two months and one day ; that is about as long as

it takes a globe-trotter to circle the earth, when he is really on his mettle, but all too short to get a sound knowledge of the people of a country.

My personal experiences were of the pleasantest. The King and his officials were considerate and kind, and all with whom I came into contact were polite and obliging.

It was difficult to credit, as I had read, and as I was told, that they are a vindictive and cruel and treacherous people.

The character I heard of them seems to be aptly described by Byron in the lines—

> " As mild and meek a mannered man
> As ever scuttled ship or cut a throat."

But, as I have said above, the side of their character seen by me was pleasant and hospitable.

It is true I heard of dreadful punishments—of lopping off the hands, putting out the eyes, stoning to death, and burying alive—but I would rather not comment on this, as in the history of my own country I see such happenings were not unknown.

The publicity and frequency of hangings, often for what one must consider trivial offences, almost come into our own memory of events in this country.

The impression strongest in me after I got over the boundary, and had left railways, telegraphs, and hotels behind, was that I had lighted on some old-time scene in England.

For example, one day we overtook a mounted traveller, with hawk, hooded and jessed, on his right wrist. When I lay in the castle of the Governor of Ghorband, the next room to mine contained a pair of complaining hawks, which were being trained.

There were fortified dwellings, some with structures remindful of the Norman keep. The people were all armed, which reminded me that once all freemen in England had to own arms and carry them.

The public gallows at Charikar, in Kohistan—with the pit—both well shown in the slide, recall the old-time charters of " pit and gallows " granted to Lords of the Manor in this country. But in Afghanistan they are already a stage beyond local justice, for the Amir reserves to himself, as I understand, the right of pronouncing all sentences on grave offences and habitual offenders.

When I was in Jellalabad, at the end of 1909, I was told that there were 300 prisoners waiting sentence. They are brought

before him as he sits at a desk, with a pen in his hand. The chief "mirza," or clerk, reads out the offence, and the finding of the judge, and gives a list of previous offences. The King then orders the punishment. My informant told me that the Afghans receive their sentence with great stoicism. Only once had he seen despair, and that was when the men were condemned to the "well," where they are placed to live and die amongst skeletons and corpses of previous prisoners out of the light of day. On that occasion the men threw themselves on the ground and asked as a favour to be hanged. But, leaving this unpleasant topic, an incident, rather startling, happened, which might readily have occurred here in the time of King John, and might have been a reason for Chapter XXVIII. of the Magna Charta.

The incident was a riot, and it was caused by an exercise of a claim for purveyance. Our party of fifty-three men and horses claimed food and provender, on the ground that I was the King's guest.

But the sturdy villagers on the flanks of the Hindu Kush would not have it, so two of them were flogged, and dragged with us to be ill-used, until they gave the provisions demanded. Then the villagers rose *en masse*, liberated the two prisoners, and stoned the guards. One of them was bruised all over, had a black eye, and lost two teeth.

My journey from Dakka (the various stages are shown on p. 6), the frontier town in Afghanistan, was along or near the Cabul River to Jellalabad, and thence through fertile valleys and over steep passes to Barikab. From Barikab two roads go to Cabul. The newer one runs up the Tezin River to Khakijabad, and through the Khoord-Cabul Pass (of mournful memory); and the older one (by which I returned) over the Lataband Pass, famous for its cages, in which highwaymen convicted of murder and robbery were slowly starved to death. The cages and their bones and fragments of clothes remain as warning to passers-by.

The road from Dakka to Cabul is approaching completion. It is, like the curate's egg, very good in parts, but other places are bad. These latter are where streams debouch across the road track. In the stage from Jagdallak to Barikab, for example, there are several quite wide, shallow river-tracks crossing the road at right angles. Here the road has to be remade after each flood. The re-making, it is true, only means clearing away pebbles and boulders, in which this part of Afghanistan is pain-

fully rich. These pebbles are derived from the weathering of huge beds of conglomerates of the Cretaceous or Early Tertiary Age.

Across these pebbly stretches, the cleared track, about 20 feet wide, leads the traveller to higher land, where the

STAGES FROM DAKKA TO CABUL, VARYING FROM TWELVE TO FIFTEEN MILES.

Up Journey. — *Down Journey.*

Cabul
|
Bhutkak

(Through Khoord-Cabul Pass) — (Over the Lataband Pass and through Cage Gorge.)

Khakijabad
|
Up the Tezin River
|
Barikab
|
Jagdallak (ruby mines)
|
Surkhphul (famous old bridge, made by Shah Ja~~j~~an) h
|
Nimla (Serai and garden, made by Shah Ja~~j~~an) h
|
Bowley
| .. { Between these places hot spri~~n~~ngs, visited by Indian pilgrims.
Jellalabad
|
Girdikaj
|
Chardeh
| .. { Ferry across Cabul River, made of mussucks.
Basawal
|
Dakka .. Afghanistan.

Lundi Kotal Leased from independent tribes (Afridis).

Peshawur .. British India.

road has been skilfully engineered over passes of considerable altitude.

The zigzag roads over the passes in the soft cretaceous rocks are excellent, the "khud" side being protected by a wall of loose stone masonry. The same is the case where the roads have

been blasted, at great expense and labour, out of the hard crystalline and limestone rocks.

The roads are good also in the pebbly uplands of Gandamak, where one sees nothing but pebbles and boulders for miles and miles.

The roads are well culverted and bridged, of masonry, wood, and iron, as convenient. There is a suspension bridge over the Cabul River near Laghman.

The non-repair of the highway in Afghanistan is a serious matter. The police can drive the villagers to the work, or get them fined and punished before the police magistrate. I was witness to the rough seizure of a party of six weavers, on the village weaving-ground, who were torn with considerable violence and rough handling from their looms, and marched off to repair the highway. Here, again, I remembered that the non-repair of highways in England, until quite recent times, was a felony, entailing considerable penalties on the felon.

The roads across fertile and cultivated country have drains on each side, along which the irrigating waters are led and coursed over the fields.

Irrigation is universal in Afghanistan, and cultivation flourishes exceedingly. After harvesting Indian corn, wheat is sown. Sugar-cane, cotton, hot-climate products, and then wheat and vegetables.

A surprise to me, who had witnessed in India the anxiety of a powerful Government to avoid wounding the religious sentiments of the people, was the treatment of graveyards in Afghanistan.

Ruthlessly, not swerving to the right nor left, the roads have been carried right through the graveyards, and bones still stick out of the roadside.

My Afghan companions said they did not like it, but the Amir ordered the roads to be made in this way, so what could they do ?

Graves are generally neglected, but in one case near Dakka I found a grave decorated with bunting. This is the grave of the murderer of a European a few years ago. The murderer was executed, but the people apparently consider the man worthy of memory, and decorate his grave.

An interesting notice on a tree on the side of the roadway attracted attention and good-humoured comment from my companions. It was signed by the King, and ran thus :

" Be it known to all passers-by that the roads and streets were constructed for the reason that crossing and passing of my subjects may take place with ease and convenience, and not for the reason that two or more persons may stand in the centre of the road, in order to talk to one another, or to have a friendly wrestle with one another."

There were other notices, ordering travellers on the highway what to do when the King was motoring or driving, such as to hold their horses' heads, and to see they did not kick at the royal conveyance.

At the Government printing-press in Cabul many such were shown to me. The King takes a real live interest in all the matters of the country, even down to such minutiæ as the behaviour of passers-by on the public roads.

The heavy work of road-making by blasting and excavation has been carried out by the sappers and miners, an excellent body of men, chiefly Hazaras, whose lot in Afghanistan appears to be that of labour.

At the time of my visit there were 8,000 men engaged on road-making, each man getting 10 Cabulee rupees per month—that is about six shillings and eightpence.

About three-fifths of the road is complete, and shortly the King hopes to be able to motor from Cabul to Dakka.

Some critics of the country say that the King has had the roads vigorously carried on, because of his love of motoring, but he himself told me it was to open up and make his country prosperous. To use his own simile, " roads are like arteries." " Just as the arteries carry the blood through the body, so roads carry the commerce and trade through the country."

The new roads, or complete renewal and realignment of roads, are made by and at the expense of Government, but road repairs are done by, and at the expense of, the villagers.

My journey was as comfortable as it could be made, but my illusions on the subject of caravanserais, gained from the " Arabian Nights " tales, were rudely broken. The serais are dirty and verminous, and the rooms smoky and dark. I preferred a tent pitched on the roof of the serai, but the spot had to be thoroughly cleansed before the tent could be pitched. The roof of a serai is the " retiring room " for the crowd.

One night a flock of sheep was herded on the roof of the serai, and made efforts to rush my tent, but my guard successfully shoo'd them off.

The Afghans have an uncomfortable habit of starting early, and when it is cold it is not pleasant to turn out from sheepskin coverlets into the nippy air. I asked why they did it, and they said they had to get up early for prayers, and when they were up they might as well start. So I was the victim of their piety, and shivered till the sun warmed me.

My visit to Cabul happened at a time of festivity. Prince Enayatullah Khan, the eldest son, was married, and sports and military shows occupied a full week, from morning until midnight. The thermometer after sunset dipped to freezing-point, but the populace huddled together and kept themselves warm to watch the fun. They make a good-natured crowd, and I elbowed my way amongst them without let or hindrance, and without any guard.

The King, who is fond of talking and lecturing, had many conversations with me, and talked of his country and his people during these gatherings.

My visit was in connection with coal-supplies for his large and increasing factories and workshops. He stated that he had good coal at "Yusuf Dara,"* but the expense of carriage would be great, and the cost of building 300 miles of railway or wire-rope tramway across the Hindu Kush was prohibitive. He felt sure he had good coal, for it had been burnt in his own fireplace in the room where we conversed ; and it was quite near at hand, in the Valley of Ghorband. It had been adversely reported on, but he did not believe the report. He wanted me to go and see the outcrops, and tell him whether the coal would last for months, or a year, or years, and my business then would be to send him a qualified coal-mining engineer.

Some questions of economy in mining arose during this interview, and the King, who is fond of lecturing and of proving points in the Eastern manner, by illustration, said : "No, economy is not always good and not always wise. Take the case of a country. If, in order to be economical, you neglect to defend it, you will find in the end it is not cheap. Money spent on arming and training soldiers is well spent, as it prevents ultimate disaster."

The King stated that he must get coal for his shops, as the wood-supply was getting short. He could in the last resort get Indian coal from Peshawur, but the cost in bags, carried by camels, would be great. My suggestions that a railway could be

* See map in "Gates of India," by Sir Thomas Holdich.

easily made led him to say that he had had an English surveyor at Peshawur ready a few years ago to survey a railway-line to Cabul, but the matter dropped.

It was not surprising to hear this, for the Afghans on the journey up discussed the question of railways, and said that railways increased the cost of food. If you built a railway, away went the wheat and other food products to other countries; and they cited the fact that wheat flour had increased from 24 seers per rupee to 6 seers per rupee in Peshawur since the railway was built to that place. That is the ordinary man's attitude towards railways! The rulers feel that the railway will introduce complications in the control of the railway by European drivers and officials, and lead to loss of independence.

He spoke of his shops—the workshops that turned out war material; the leather and boot factory, where he made leggings and boots and harness; the clothing factory, where he made uniforms. He was building a woollen factory to make cloth. "My wool," he said, "goes to India, and comes back cloth. I shall save that expense. I want to be able to clothe as well as feed my people."

Subsequent interviews and conversation with the European and Afghan officials convinced me that the Amir is genuinely anxious for the prosperity of his people, and is striving for their good. He is not heartily supported by his officials. They are on the make, it is universally admitted. Whenever there is a chance of annexing something it is annexed. Every wage-receiver pays something to somebody. A high Afghan official assured me that the King, and probably his son, stand alone in an honest desire to improve the lot of the people and to better the country; the officials and others of the Court are with him only as far as they benefit themselves.

The King has great schemes for the improvement of agriculture. Among them the restoration of the great dam at Ghazni, built by the great Afghan hero, Mahomed of Ghazni. This dam, which has been useless for many hundred years, will restore Ghazni to its position as the garden of Afghanistan.

A further scheme to harness the waters of the Panjshir River,* and to carry the electricity generated to Cabul, at a cost of £30,000, to drive the machinery at the factories and workshops, is still under discussion. This scheme will be adopted, if coal is not discovered at a reasonable distance from Cabul.

* See maps in "Gates of India," by Sir Thomas Holdich.

To make Afghanistan a land of plenty, of self-support, and to maintain a vigilant independence, is the aim of the King.

The shops and factories were in full swing, and it was interesting to see boots and rifles and cannons being made in that far-away place.

The Madrassa Herbeia Serajia, or Royal Military College for Cadets.

The inspection of this College, under the guidance of the Prince Enayatullah, was a most interesting experience. The College is established for the education of the sons of the Sirdars and Court officials, to fit them for commissions in the army. There are eighty students, some quite small lads ; others are reaching manhood. The education is under the control of Colonel Mahomed Sami (a Turk), who has had military training in Turkey and Germany, and who speaks French. Two companies of Jadid-ul-Islami (formerly Kafirs) are attached to the college for purposes of drill. The curriculum is : First and foremost, the Koran. The King will have no education without religion. There are four classes, arithmetic, mensuration, geometry being soundly taught. An examination was held that was highly creditable. Gymnastics are taught, and the boys do it creditably. The lads drill and march as common soldiers, but the smaller lads do so without arms.

It was mentioned that the older boys may be sent to Europe, to learn the latest thing in military matters ; but Japan is more likely to be the country chosen, as the Japanese loom largely in the vision of Asiatics.

The boys are well behaved, and quite interested in their work.

The Prince, who is Governor of the College, gave an address to the elder boys, and it is worth preserving. It was on the Russo-Japanese War, extolling the sobriety and patriotism and discipline of the Japanese soldier, and the ardour of the Japanese officer, and contrasted it with the drunkenness of the Russian soldier, and the foppishness of the Russian officer, who spent his time twirling his moustache in Port Arthur, instead of being in his place with the army.

Then he held an examination, asking what are a soldier's chief duties ? "To march, fight, and eat !" was the reply. "Quite right," said he ; "but which is the most important ?" "To march well !" "Why ?" asked the Prince. "Because,"

came the reply, " if you can't march well, you either do not arrive at all, or you arrive too tired to either fight or eat." " And what is necessary for good marching ?" he continued. " Good boots," was the reply. " Yes," he said. " My father the King makes good boots for all his soldiers." A further item of information was that the Japanese carried a dose of opening medicine, which they took weekly, to put them right inside. I found out afterwards that this is a habit of the members of the Afghan Royal Family, so I suppose his subjects will dutifully carry it out.

In addition to this college, the King allowed Abdul Gani, the education officer sent up from India, one lakh of rupees yearly, to be spent on improvement of education generally in Afghanistan. Some progress was made, but Abdul Gani, a most estimable person, got mixed up in treason, and he was in prison on my visit, and the matter of general education was in the background.

The revolutionary programme was a move for parliamentary institution by petition. But the movement excited the alarm of the King, and Abdul Gani and others were imprisoned. My informant told with bated breath of messengers arriving in Cabul post haste from Jellalabad, and then the booming of a gun told the capital of another execution. There was great fear and disquiet in Cabul, and all those who had discussed constitutional government were fearful as to whether they would be the next victims.

It was stated the King held some kind of Parliament—nominated, of course—but decided that the members were too ignorant for legislative work, and said they wanted thirty years' education to be fitted for the post ; and so they were dismissed to their homes, and the next generation will have to deal with the problems of parliamentary government.

The King and his sons and brothers are fond of military shows. They were in uniform of some kind or other all the week, and a march past was a daily occurrence. On the last day of the wedding festivities 11,000 troops, all well uniformed, well booted, well armed—infantry, cavalry, and artillery—marched past in excellent time and spirits, with well-equipped bands of music. The bandsmen play by ear, and the " British Grenadier " is a favourite air.

The men are excellent in drill and guns, and horses and harness seemed well kept.

The King lectured his Sirdars on guns and ammunition,

ancient and modern ; took a shrapnel shell to pieces, and dropped the bullets out ; made the sirdars pick them up and count them ; then reassembled the parts, and declared his shells better than German ones. He opened the breeches of his 15-pounder, 9-pounder, and 6-pounders, made us all look through the guns, and then had them fired off ; and as the shells exploded and the bullets made a dust, cried out " Bakat, Bakat !" and all the by-standers applauded. There is no doubt the military side of the King's aspirations is thoroughly appreciated by the ordinary Afghan. That they can make their own weapons and ammunition is a matter of great pride. One could see it in the stride of the King and his Court and the people, as they walked from gun to gun and listened to the King's proud comments on Afghanistan's position in manufacturing skill and military preparedness.

During the week thousands of people visited Cabul. The contrast between the country people and the Court is very marked in the matter of dress.

The Court dress like Europeans ; the country people keep to the national dress ; but on cold days you see even them in overcoats with " Sussex," or " Guard," or " Ticket-Collector," on the collars. They are discarded clothes, imported into the country, and sold at low prices.

The King loves to lecture, and one day dictated the history of the Beni Israel (lost ten tribes) and the conquest of Kafiristan.* The following was taken down from the King's dictation through the Court interpreter, Azimullah Khan. The quaintness of expression is retained :

" Dr. Saise, take your note-book, and write what I say !

" There were people living in old times in the mountains of Afghanistan, who were not of the Beni Israel (lost tribes of Israel). When the Sons of Israel came and occupied this country, they fought with these Kafirs. These old inhabitants fell into three classes : First, those who were killed in this fight ; second, those who submitted to the Beni Israel and accepted their faith ; third, those living in the inaccessible parts remained Kafirs.

" The Arab Osman captured Cabul, and Mohammedanism was adopted by the Beni Israel. They reverted to their Israelitish

* About which see Sir G. S. Robertson, in " Encyclopædia Britannica," eleventh edition, vol. xv., p. 634.

faith, but in the time of Abdul Mallik,* and under the governorship of Hoojaj of Iran, all were reconverted to Mohammedanism except the mountaineers.

"The old religion of these mountaineers it is difficult to define. Like the Red Indians of North America. Went about killing people—troubling people—quite undeveloped [meaning they were savages]. Could neither read nor write. They were called Kafirs [Unbelievers, or deniers of the Faith]."

The interpreter here explained that Kafirs were unbelievers, who had no book religion, seeking to exempt Christians from the term of reproach. His Majesty intervened, and said: "No! There are only two classes—the faithful, or Mohammedans, and all others are Kafirs." "Yes, Your Majesty," said I; "we Christians divide the world in a similar way into two classes—the one is Christians, or believers, and the other is heathens, or unbelievers!" His Majesty looked me straight into the eyes, and then laughed. If he had labelled me "Kafir," he himself was styled a heathen. The King continued:

"In the year Hijra (the flight to Medina), 1309 and 1310, troops were raised. It was in the time of Abdur Rahman Khan (the late Amir, Zia-ul-Millet ud Din). The people of Kafiristan made themselves into two parts. One of them fought, and the other part yielded to us without fighting. Those (who yielded) without fighting became Mohammedans, and all remained in their own places. They have their own language in each village. Mollahs go to live with them, and schools (are established) to teach the Koran.

"Those who fought (and were subdued) were brought to Cabul—men, women, and children—and all are kept here; and in their stead we sent our own people (Afghans). All have places, houses, and land near Cabul to live (dwell). It is thirty-six miles (away from Cabul) to the south and west. In the beginning they numbered 5,000; now increased and increasing. Climate did not suit them at first. Gradually (they have become) acclimatized. We have them (the men) in the army. They are 1,800 regular troops. They are not all in one regiment, but are spread all over (the army). From these, two companies, attached to the Royal Military College for drill with the cadets, are drawn.

"Spreading them over the whole army kept them from hatching plots. This arrangement is the work of myself. They are all now Mohammedans.

* A.D. 690 to 700.

" As all Kafiristan is now Mohammedan, and Kafir means to deny the Faith, I have given the country a new name, and called it Nouristan (the country of light), because the light of Islam illumines it.

" The people are called Jadid-ul-Islam, or the New Mohammedans."

A note in my book to this effect, " How Beni-Israel came to Cabul," reminds me of the promise of His Majesty to relate it, but to my infinite regret no opportunity ever showed itself for this. His Majesty further asked me to send him a transcript of these notes for his revision. It was sent, but the clerks and others delayed it, so that I left Afghanistan without the proof being revised by the King.

The King's claim to be of Israelitish origin is interesting, and when one considers the Hebrew features, the pride of the people, and their hatred of Jews, this view deserves attention. Sir Thomas Holdich handles the pros and cons of this question well in " The Gates of India." The claim of the Afghans to be Beni-Israel seems to be based on more reasonable grounds than the theories that suggest the British, or the North American Indians, are the lost ten tribes.

Then, Kafirs are different in appearance to the Afghans. The view that they are descendants of Greeks settled in Afghanistan prior to Alexander the Great's invasion seems, on the high authority of Sir Thomas Holdich (" Gates of India "), to be a very reasonable and satisfying one.

The wedding festivities being at an end, the journey to the coal-fields was taken.

Visit to Coal-Fields at Ghorband.

The road was through Kohistan and up the Ghorband River to the flanks of the Hindu Kush.

For some distance out of Cabul telephone-posts showed the introduction of speedier methods of communication than relays of galloping horses. Telephone communication is to be made from Cabul to the various seats of local government. The members of my party discussed what would happen if, when the King rings up late at night or during a hot afternoon, the operator was asleep, and the form of punishment that might be appropriate to such an offence.

The lovely Plain of Kohistan, with its famous vineyards and

well-cultivated wheat-fields, was passed in two days, with many incidents of interest.

One night firing was heard ; it was said to be a wedding jollification. But the Kotwal next morning said it was a murder, and, in addition, another murder with a knife had been perpetrated. The turbulent character of the Kohistani, and their objection to taxation, was the subject of conversation among my companions. Their national dance is a sword dance, in which the swords hang from a necklace round the throat. The dancer whirls round so that the swords stick straight out from his neck like the spokes of a wheel. He progresses a hundred yards in this way, amid a loud "tum-tumming," and when breathless another man takes his place.

At Charikar, which is near the site of Alexander's winter camp, so many centuries ago, there is a fine bazaar—famous for its length, as the Afghans explained.

Its narrowness, to me, was the most noticeable feature ; and yet we rode through it, all of us, pushing the ordinary man against the sides of the shops. The bazaar is covered throughout, and is so long that several lanes open into it at different points, so that the bazaar can be entered in many places. Manchester goods, goloshes with Russian names on them, steaming "samovars," piles of grapes and melons, oranges, apples, cutlery, shoes, and top-boots and butcher's meat, were to be seen exposed for sale. Long-bearded Mohammedans and yellow-turbaned, shaven Hindus kept shop. Women in long "boorkhas" chaffered for goods, and all seemed good-tempered.

The food of the Kohistanis in winter is made of ground walnuts and mulberries, dried in the sun. It is called "tilkhana," and is eaten with great relish by the children. A familiar object at one stopping-place were eggs, hard-boiled and stained a deep purple. The Kohistanis celebrate the Eed (which was then being held), just as we do Easter, by giving coloured eggs as presents. They are used in gambling, the owner of the egg that will crack other eggs taking in the stakes. Various devices for hardening the eggs were discussed by the party.

Between Charikar—where the public gallows is so conspicuous—and the mouth of the Ghorband Valley is a very holy place, and all the party made a slight detour to visit it. It consists of a tomb, and a mosque built over it, and a small village.

The tomb enshrines the remains of Hazrat Asha Opyam Saheb, a saint from Bokaro, who died here on Friday in the

Moharram of Hizri 837 (A.D. 1432). On this particularly holy Friday, I was told, the heavenly messengers (" paiks "), Munkar and Nakal, who hale the souls of the dead before the Judge, are off duty, so that the saint went to Paradise without let or hindrance.

The shrine is resorted to by persons suffering from madness or dog-bites. The patients live in the village for forty days, and make offerings at the shrine and pay their respects to the saint.

We were all of us admitted into the mosque with our boots on, and were shown the tomb ; and the caretaker, who is a descendant of the saint, accepted my token of respect, in the shape of " buckshish," in quite a friendly manner.

I had a surprise here. As I stood in the gloom while the leader of our expedition deciphered the date from the old tomb, I noticed a cheap-looking picture on the wall. The attendant on the tomb saw my glance, and said, " Mecca !" It was a calendar for 1909, with a picture of Mecca, showing the Kaaba and other features of that holy city, all duly labelled in Persian. At the foot of the calendar was the legend : " Mellin's food—untouched by hand !"

I think this was a triumph of advertising skill. I dare say many a holy place in the East has the same calendar.

But I had to give the finishing touch to the advertisement by explaining what Mellin's food was, and I told them it was good for the sick generally, and their patients might find it of use ; but I could give no opinion of its value in madness and dog-bites.

At Mattock we turned into the Ghorband Valley—it is very narrow at this point, with high, precipitous cliffs of crystalline and igneous rocks—and proceeded up the right-hand side on a well-made road. The wind howled as we rode along. Our leader told me this wind, which is always blowing, quite frightened people years ago, and was a great asset of the Hazaras before their conquest by Abdur Rahman Khan.

They swooped down from this valley and looted Kohistan, and then fled away up the gorge, until they passed beyond the sheltering winds, which were thought to be evil spirits by the Kohistanis.

The valley widened as we passed up, so that cultivation becomes possible, and small settlements of poor houses of stone, with flat roofs, became frequent. These houses have no protecting wall, but sturdy Afghan dogs guarded them. They are

not very friendly to passers-by. A few big fowls run about near the buildings, and sheep and goats feed high up on the hill-sides. It looked as if they would fall off, so steep are the hill-sides. The men and women are Hazaras, with squat, good-natured looking faces.

They get the land for three years without rent, then three years with half rent, and then a full assessment, and are not moved as long as they continue to pay their rent.

They have to clear off the stones, which are liberally spread all over this valley, as, indeed, over all the parts of Afghanistan I saw. The pebbles and boulders, huge and small, are piled up into hills, several hundreds of feet high, in this valley, resting against the rugged mountain-sides. It is clear the valley was once filled up with this débris, and the river has cut down through them, carrying some pebbles and boulders away, and leaving others on the level patches above the river-sides.

The cultivator collects the flatter pebbles into walls for his fields and houses, and then sets out his crops and digs irrigation drains.

As one passes up towards Ghorband there are older villages of considerable size, surrounded by orchards of all kinds of trees. The willow is everywhere, and I found in an adjoining valley a weeping-willow. It is called "Mejnoun's willow," in reference to the love story of Mejoon and Leila.

Apples, pears, grapes, peaches, almonds, pomegranates, are produced in this land of plenty. It is called the Bagh-i-Aughan, or Garden of the Afghans or the hillsmen (highlanders). It is a beautiful valley.

Rough, rugged, snow-capped mountains form the edge, and rounded but steep and grass-covered hills lead down to the flats, where valleys and richly cultivated land spread out to the rapidly flowing river.

The road is excellent all through, and it leads a long way, for we frequently met pack-asses, laden with salt, from far Badakshan, and troops of Hazaras from the snow-covered Hindu Kush on their way for winter service in Cabul.

We passed a "panja chunar" tree (a sycamore) on the way up this valley. Each member of the party who had, or feared, toothache or stomach-ache threw a small stone into the tree.

It appears that a holy man had sat and lived under this tree, and the throwing of the stone was to cure or ward off toothache. One of my party had a raging toothache the next day, so I took

leave to doubt the efficacy of the treatment the day before. But I was met by the statement that the man had not performed the ceremony in a proper frame of mind, for the fame of the tree was widespread, and it was infallible to those of real faith. On the return journey we met a peasant driving a donkey, on which a small boy was seated. He told us, after salutations, that he was taking the boy to that very tree to cure bad stomach-ache, and to break off a twig from the tree. The length of the twig would indicate the length of " nan " or bread that the boy could eat and properly digest.

My journey to Ghorband brought me to the coal-mines. The places shown to me contained small seams of lignite, quite unworkable, on which large sums had been expended.

Lead-Mines.

It was my good fortune to see the lead-mines of Ferengal. The ore (" galena ") occurs as grains disseminated in limestone rock. The mine is worked by Hazaras, who chip out the ore-bearing stone with hammer and chisel, following it throughout the hill in galleries and rooms that vary according to the amount of ore that were worked. Some places are very wide and high ; others are quite small. There was no ventilation in the mine. The Afghan manager told me that the oil-lamps sometimes go out, and the miners get sick. He thought it was the influence of evil spirits. My advice to him was to make more openings into the mine, so as to let good air in and bad air out. With only one entrance the air naturally fouls. No timbering is used in the mine, and accidents sometimes occur from falls of the roof. The miners then say " Inshallah " (the will of God).

As explosives are not used, and the rocks are not shaken, and the limestone is compact, there are not many casualties.

The laborious chipping out of the ore is under all circumstances the best method of work from the point of view of safety.

The lead ore was crushed, washed, and smelted with willow-wood fuel, and an ingot of lead resulted. The out-turn of the mine was not stated, but it is sufficient to keep up the supply of bullets required for military purposes. As the lead will not roll into sheets, it probably contains antimony.

The Afghan officials appear to know nothing of the mining, or concentrating, or smelting. When Abdurrahman Khan (the late Amir) conquered the Hazaras, he took the mines, and their

metallurgical skill, and converted the Hazaras from owners into wage-earners. Any question I asked about methods of smelting, etc., were replied to by the older Hazaras. When I asked who trained the smelters, I was told : " The old Hazaras do it !"

It was very pleasing to see an indigenous industry like this lead mining and metallurgy so well carried out by the Hazaras.

Ruby-Mines.

On my way back to India I visited the ruby-mines of Jagdallak. Here the miners are all Afghans from the neighbourhood. The rubies occur in bands of white marble, which stand vertical.

The gem-bearing bands are narrow. The limestone is mined in long quarries on the hill-tops, about 3 feet wide, the rock being shattered by blasting with country-made powder.

The result is the rubies are shaken and starred, and are not very fine gems. They are made up in Cabul by native lapidaries for the ladies of the harem.

No timbering is used in this mining, and the quarry sides collapse after some depth is reached. The miners use iron rods to ram or tamp the shot-holes, and explosions maim several of them.

I was less impressed by this work, as a question of mining, than I was by the mining of the Hazaras on the flanks of the Hindu Kush.

As explained in the beginning of the address, my visit was a short one. It was a pleasant experience, but I would not have had it longer. The officials were nice and courteous, and the Afghan is the politest of men ; and it is the politeness of a strong man, not the polite humility of the weak. When they shook hands with me, they gripped mine with both their hands. When I joined them for an evening chat in their room, they all rose and pressed the best place on me.

They were inattentive to details for my comfort at times, but their sorrowful apologies disarmed all criticism.

I came away having quite enjoyed myself, and I have now the pleasantest recollections of my visit to Afghanistan.

DISCUSSION

The Chairman said that the paper they had heard might be described as non-controversial, and it was not to be supposed that much discussion would arise upon it. He had great pleasure in proposing a hearty vote of thanks to Dr. Saise for his admirable and interesting lecture. The photographs were excellent, and the dry humour with which the narrative had been told made the time fly by.

Colonel Sir Thomas Holdich said he supposed that, when Dr. Saise was giving them his most interesting story of his journey to Cabul and his experiences there, he was not aware that his audience included General Sir James Hills-Johnes, who thirty years ago was the Acting-Governor of the city. No one could tell them better than the General how great must have been the progress of Cabul since that time, judging from the account they had just heard.

General Sir James Hills-Johnes said it was surprising to see from the pictures and to hear from the lecturer how wonderful had been the advances made, particularly in the education and training of the soldiery, since the days to which Sir Thomas Holdich had referred. It was gratifying to hear how interested the Amir was in the welfare of his country. He seemed to be pushing it on in a truly marvellous way. Dr. Saise was to be congratulated upon the interesting trip he made, and the way he was treated by the Amir and by the Afghans generally. When he was Acting-Governor of the city, the Afghans were regarded as very treacherous, but that was not so much the case now. When Ayoub Khan was beaten, his (the speaker's) native officer told him that he was certain to return and give trouble. He added : " You British don't know how to treat the Afghan. He knows that you have taken this place ; but that was good luck more than anything else. When you took this place you ought to have knocked the Afghan down, and when he got up you should have knocked him down a second time. Until you have done that he will not be your real friend. He will then be ready to shake hands with you." He was glad that Dr. Saise had not met with that style of conduct in Afghanistan, and that the people were evidently very much improved by education.

Lord Lamington : As it fell to my lot to entertain His Majesty the Amir in Bombay during his Indian tour, I should like to bear out the character that was given him by the lecturer. No one who met him could fail to be struck by his great astuteness, his great powers of observation, and his great powers of talking. His Majesty is a most remarkable person. He has to adopt severe measures at

times, but his methods are no doubt necessary for the government of so turbulent a people. He means to do the best he can for his country and countrymen, and to bring them up to a good standard of enlightenment, which will be, of course, a long process. The lecture has been very valuable and interesting. We have learned a great deal more about Afghanistan than we have before had an opportunity of knowing.

Dr. Saise, in returning thanks for the appreciation of his lecture that had been expressed, said that beating of Afghans in fault was still common. One of his guards arrived late one day, and the chief of the party had the man spread-eagled and given forty blows with a whip. When he (Dr. Saise) objected, the head-man replied : " We won't do it again, if you don't like it ; but let me assure you that the Afghan is like a mule : if you don't beat him, he won't work."

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